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# MONTANA NEWS

SOCIAL AND REHABILITATION SERVICES

NUMBER 1

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VOL. 5





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# SRS Has Lost Another Friend

**F**or the second time within a months' span, the Montana Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services was stunned by the sudden death of an employee.

Gerry Davis, staff trainer and orientation specialist at the SRS Orientation Center in Butte, was killed December 13, 1975, when his pickup slid off a road on Blue Mountain near Missoula.

Davis first worked with SRS in the summer of 1961 while he was an undergraduate student in the School of Social Work at the University of Montana. In fact, he was one of the first social work students to take part in the summer trainee program. After his graduation the following year, he came to work as a permanent SRS employee.

He was a child welfare worker in the Missoula County Welfare Office until 1965 when he took leave to begin graduate studies at the University of Utah. Davis returned the summer of 1966 to work in the Glasgow District Office. He went back to the U of U that fall and received his master's degree in social work in 1967.

STATE OF MONTANA

**SRS NEWS**  
SOCIAL AND REHABILITATION SERVICES

Thomas L. Judge..... Governor  
Theodore P. Carkulis..... Director

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**Gery Davis**

He accepted a position as recruitment and orientation assistant and in 1969 was promoted to head the program at the Orientation Center in Butte.

The organizations to which Davis belonged include the National Association for Social Workers, the Child Welfare League of America and the American Public Welfare Association. He published articles in the magazine "Child Welfare". He taught courses on a part-time basis at Montana State University and served as a consultant to numerous professional organizations within and without Montana.

Davis was born March 21, 1940, in Missoula and was raised there. He is survived by his children, Jill and Bryan, of Missoula; his father, Sam J. Davis, Missoula; his brother, Eugene, Lakewood, Ca., and several aunts and uncles.

At the time of his death, Davis' family requested that any memorial contributions be made to Campus Crusade, care of Gene Davis, 5826 Peace Avenue, Lakewood, Ca. 90712.



**Theodore Carkulis, director, Montana Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services.**

**Carkulis and Joan Easbey, Administrative Secretary.**



# Carkulis Announces Retirement After 38 Years' State Service

**T**heodore Carkulis, director of the Montana Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services (and the former Department of Public Welfare) for the past seven years, has announced his retirement.

Carkulis, who turned 62 years of age on March 21, has been in state service for nearly 38 years and has been with SRS for 33 years. His plans are to be able to spend more time at home and also to do some traveling.

Gov. Thomas L. Judge says he has regretfully accepted the department head's resignation and that Carkulis has done "an outstanding job".

SRS is one of the state's largest agencies. It employs nearly 1,000 workers statewide and

provides services for some 50,000 Montanans.

Carkulis began work with SRS as a statistical clerk in 1942. He was advanced to director of the department by Forrest H. Anderson in his first major appointment following his election as governor in November 1968. Carkulis assumed charge of the department in January 1969, following the retirement of W. J. Fouse.

When Judge was still governor-elect in December 1972 he announced Carkulis would be continued as director.

Carkulis attended schools in his native Great Falls and in Butte before attending the University of Montana. Before joining SRS he was an instructor of an education and recreation project in Butte.



# Provision of Social Services Dates Back to Tribal Times



**C**enturies ago in this country—way back in tribal times—the role of the tribe’s chief was to provide social services of a sort. He shielded his people against wild animals, atmospheric elements and human enemies.

Social services and their providers have changed drastically since then. However, it was only about 100 years ago that the magnitude of social problems became so great in this country that the old human institutions—family, friends, churches and the community in general—could no longer handle them. Industrialized society developed the need for organized private and public social services agencies.

In the beginning, religion provided the basis for social concerns. Spiritual reward was the incentive for charitable acts. Very little mind was paid to getting at the root of a person’s problem. A gift of food, money or clothing would help out a needy person for a while and would earn indulgence for the benefactor, so, for the moment, both felt better off.

Despite the Puritan belief that “poverty was punishment by a righteous God,” religion did develop a social conscience responsive to need.

Social services in the United States are rooted in the English Poor Laws and the Charity Organization Movement in England.

With the passage of the English Poor Law of 1601 came the first legally required public responsibility for dependent persons. The responsibility was assigned first to parents and grandparents. If there was no family to shoulder the burden, then the local community became responsible.

Three classes of poor were delineated by the Poor Law of 1601. The “able-bodied poor” were forced into workhouses. Citizens were not allowed to give them alms. Such “sturdy beggars”, as they were known, would be put in the stocks or thrown into jail for refusing to go to a workhouse.

The “impotent poor” were those who were unable to work—“the sick, the old, the blind, the deaf-mute, the lame, the demented and the mothers of young children”. These people were kept in the almshouse unless there was some other place they could be maintained more cheaply.

The third class was “dependent children”. These orphans, foundlings and children whose parents were too poor to care for them were farmed out to any citizens willing to take them without compensation. If no free home were available, they were given to the lowest bidder.

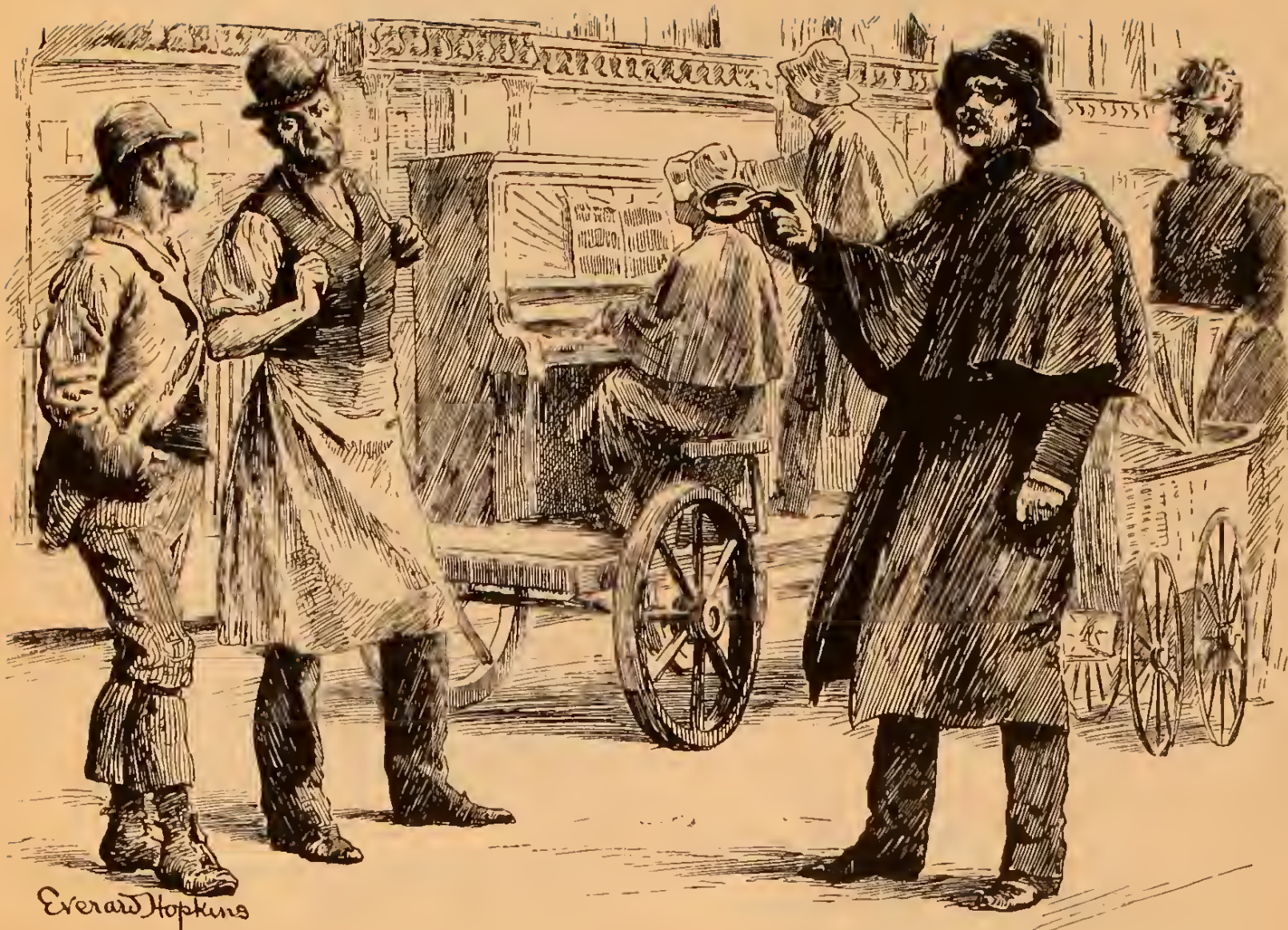
The Poor Law of 1601 also instituted overseers of the poor—the first eligibility technicians. They received applications for relief and investigated the applicant’s situation to determine whether he or she was eligible.

The fundamental concepts of the Poor Law of 1601 were carried to the colonies and set the pattern for 300 years.

Social service historians comment that “basically, poor law principles and ‘poor law mentality’, which ascribed causes of poverty to personal inadequacy, remained in operation until the establishment of a modern social security system in the 20th century”.

It was quite early in colonial history that institutions such as insane asylums, prisons and special schools were established. Earliest was the





first hospital for the insane, founded at Williamsburg, VA., in 1773. The first state prison filled its cells in 1790 in Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly Love. In Danville, Ky., the first state school for the deaf and blind was founded in 1822.

After that, "outdoor relief," assistance that could be provided right in the home, was formulated for special categories of needy people. Aid to the blind was first given in Ohio in 1898. Aid to dependent children was initiated in Illinois in 1911, and Montana began the first state old age assistance program in 1923.

## Professionalism Develops

It was in London in 1869, when the Charity Organization Society was formed, that a professional attitude toward social services began developing.

The idea behind the movement was not to grant relief but rather to investigate applicants. It established a central index of recipients to prevent fraud and duplication. The Charity Organization Society sent out district committees to make "friendly visits" to try to find substitutes for relief and to encourage utilization of the "alms of good advice". The same idea was carried over to the colonies and by 1895 there were about 100 societies in this country.

Another idea carried over from England was that of settlement houses, probably the most famous of which, in the United States, was Hull House. Jane Addams and Ellen Gates founded Hull House in Chicago in 1889. They established a day nursery and promoted factory inspection, regulation of women's labor and children and workmen's compensation. They gave immigrants and their children special instruction in what they referred to as Americanization and promoted public recreation, visiting nurse programs and arts and crafts classes.

## Social Security Act

The welfare and social services we know today have their foundation in English history, but the biggest step in their evolution was the enactment of the Social Security Act during the Great Depression in 1935. It provided for social insurance, public assistance, social services, health insurance for the aged and disabled, payment of medical costs for the needy, and health services for maternity care and crippled children.

The Social Security Act still provides for social services, and last year President Ford signed into law an amendment which calls for public participation in deciding which social services each state will provide. The amendment is known as Title 20 of the Social Security Act. Under Title 20, family planning is the only specific social service the federal government says states must provide. Other than that, states are free to choose their own, within certain categories, depending upon their individual needs. Montana provides a variety of services for older people, as well as day care, foster care, protective services against personal exploitation and youth development services.

Within the Montana Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services are five divisions which work directly with people in need of any of a variety of social services. They are Community Services Division, Economic Assistance Division, Visual Services Division, Rehabilitative Services Division and Veterans Affairs Division. Their goal is to help provide Montanans with the necessities of life compatible with decency and health.

This spring SRS personnel again will be conducting hearings across the state to determine what social services Montanans need and want the most.

In most instances, the local county welfare departments and veterans offices provide the actual services to those in need.



# Winter Allowance to Stay On Due to Smaller AFDC Caseload

**Means About 5%  
Increase for the Year**



Jack Carlson, administrator, SRS  
Economic Assistance Division.

**P**ublic assistance grants to provide aid to families with dependent children will be raised about five per cent this year, partially because of a decline in Montana's caseload, reports Jack Carlson, administrator, Economic Assistance Division, Montana Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services.

The increase will be effected by maintaining the winter allowance between April and October.

Carlson explains that meetings with the Montana State Low Income Organization (MSLIO) and other low-income groups produced the plan for leaving on the winter allowance. This will amount to about a five per cent increase for the year, Carlson explains. So, for the remainder of the year, the breakdown of AFDC payments will be as follows:

## New Monthly Payments Reflecting AFDC Raise

- One adult and one child may be eligible for \$163 a month for the 12-month period, a total of \$1,956. This is a \$90 increase for the year. Under the former method of removing the winter allowance between April and October, one adult and one child would have received \$148 a month from April to October and \$163 a month from October to April.

- Two adults and one child now may be eligible for 12 months at \$248 a month. This amounts to an increase of \$150 for the year. Previously such a family would have received \$223 a month between April and October and \$248 a month between October and April.

- Two adults and two children now may receive \$279 a month for a year's total of \$3,348, an increase of \$180 for the year. If the winter allowance were removed, as has been done previously, this family would receive \$249 a month between April and October and \$279 a month between October and April.

- One adult and three children now may receive \$252 a month for a year's total of \$3,024 and an increase of \$150. Previously such a family would have received \$227 a month between April and October and \$252 a month between October and April.

Two factors have made the increase in AFDC grants possible, says Carlson. First is the appropriation by the 1975 Legislature of an amount which allows a five per cent increase for the year 1976.

Second, is the marked drop in the public assistance caseload. The number of households receiving AFDC has dropped from 7,303 in January 1975 to 6,167 in January 1976, according to the SRS Statistics Bureau.

Montana's the only caseload in this are to drop so drastically, notes Carlson.



A number of reasons are behind the decline in AFDC recipient households, believes Carlson. One, he says, is the quality control program begun about a year and a half ago to tighten up the public assistance rolls. Quality control checks to be certain that only eligible persons are receiving public assistance and that they are getting what they are entitled to.

"The staffs of the county welfare departments deserve a lot of credit for the success of the quality control operation," praises Carlson. "It is up to these people," he says, "to make sure applicants give correct information and to follow through on referrals to be certain also that clients are getting the most for their benefits."

Eligibility checks have had to become more stringent, and Carlson adds that the philosophy concerning social programs was much more liberal under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson than Nixon and Ford.

"We used to use an affidavit simply to verify eligibility of an applicant. Now we verify everything an applicant or recipients says." These are the things the welfare agency will ask an AFDC applicant:

## Questions Asked Applicants

- How much money the applicant earns; what are on-the-job expenses; what, if any, and how much, additional income is received, including social security, money from relatives, income from any property owned by the applicant, money earned or received from any other source.
- Where and when the applicant's children were born and what the applicant's relationship to them is—parent, grandparent, aunt or uncle or some other relation.
- Details about the death, incapacity or continued absence of the children's parent or parents.
- Things the applicant owns and any other resources he or she has.

A second factor involves the unemployed fathers segment of aid to families with dependent children. According to Carlson, unemployed fathers have been able to collect AFDC since July of 1975, but fewer have applied than were expected. About 200 unemployed fathers have been collecting AFDC, which makes the caseload decline even more dramatic, as Carlson points out, since it occurred despite this addition to the rolls.

Unemployed fathers have the option of receiving unemployment compensation or AFDC, whichever will provide the most benefits to them and their family. A few weeks ago, the Employment Security Division reported to the press that unemployment compensation benefits could run short.

"If that happens," Carlson says, "we could see a sudden influx of unemployed fathers applying for AFDC. Although the dollar amount may be less under AFDC, AFDC offers medical benefits not available under unemployment compensation.

"Any influx of recipients will not affect the increase in the AFDC payments," Carlson emphasizes.

A third factor in the lower AFDC rolls is the upshot of the Work Incentive (WIN) and

Concentrated Employment (CEP) programs.

Through these programs, the Department of Labor and Industry has successfully provided training and found employment for many welfare recipients.

"Already," states Carlson, "WIN has done as much in the first six months of this year as was scheduled for the entire year."

All AFDC recipients with children over six years of age must register for employment, Carlson explains. Those with children younger than six will receive special help from the labor department in finding employment if they desire.

All food stamp recipients also must register for employment. Even those who already have low-paying jobs are required to register so they can get a job with higher pay if one opens.

Montana laws also require persons receiving general assistance from the counties to register for employment.

WIN and CEP are part of a fourth factor contributing to the decline in the welfare rolls, that of interdepartmental cooperation.

In addition to the labor department's work, the Department of Revenue operates a child support enforcement program in cooperation with the SRS Economic Assistance Division. This program tracks down parents who fail to pay child support and who must, therefore, rely on AFDC instead.

Between August and September of 1975, just after the program began, 86 of 106 AFDC single-parent households were not being paid the child support they should have been receiving. According to the revenue department, some \$60,000 in non-support has been claimed since the program began in July of 1975.

In many instances, notes Carlson, the AFDC grant is less than child support, so a single parent is better off with even a low-paying job and child support than with an AFDC grant.

In conjunction with support enforcement program, the Department of Revenue operates a concrete program for prosecution of fraud cases. Prosecution previously was carried out by local county attorneys, "but this wasn't very fruitful," adds Carlson, "because they already were so overburdened."

Carlson points out that just the publicity about the support enforcement and fraud investigation and prosecution units have brought in voluntarily parents who decided to pay child support after all and persons who wanted to turn themselves in for having fraudulently received public assistance grants, food stamps or medical assistance.

"Just the knowledge that such programs exist serves as some deterrent," he says.

Carlson again praises the county welfare offices for the work they've been doing in making easier the jobs of all the other agencies involved.

"They are following through with the recipients and making sure their information is accurate. Despite what some people like to believe, most of our clients don't want to be on welfare and will do whatever they can to get off. The county staffs are doing a good job of helping them to do so.

Behind the counties," continues Carlson, "is the state administration, which, in the past few years, has asked for and received all of these programs the counties now are carrying out. The Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services brought the needs to the attention of the legislature and the legislature followed through."



# Kalispell to Host Conference on Aging To Be Held This Fall



Dan Kelly

**K**alispell will be the site of the Eighth Annual Governor's Conference on Aging to be held September 23 and 24, announces Dan Kelly, chief, Aging Services Bureau, Montana Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services.

Although the speakers and specific workshops have not yet been finalized, convention director Walter Marshall of the Aging Services staff, suggests that interested persons begin thinking about registering for the conference. Gov. Thomas L. Judge, however, definitely will be one of the banquet speakers. More detailed information will be presented in a later issue of this newspaper.

Convention headquarters and accommodations will be at the Outlaw Inn. Workshops will be conducted there, and general sessions will be held at the Elks Lodge.

Registration will be \$13 a person, which

includes all workshops, all general sessions, two coffee breaks, an evening banquet on the 23rd and a noon banquet on the 24th. Marshall stresses that no tickets will be sold for individual events and no refunds will be allowed. Registration will close September 1, 1976.

Convention registration should be sent to Area VI Agency on Aging, 944 South Main, Kalispell, MT 59901. All hotel and motel reservations will be made through the Outlaw Inn. Seventy-five rooms will be available there, and after they are filled the staff will begin filling other motels and hotels in the area. A \$10 deposit will be required on all rooms, with no refunds permitted. Room registration also will close September 1.

Transportation will be provided between the Outlaw Inn and the Elks and other motels and hotels.

## Nursing Home Ombudsman Answers Varied Questions

**A**n nursing home ombudsman now is available to help answer questions and solve problems of patients, personnel, staff and administrators of the state's nursing homes.

This service is provided by the Aging Services Bureau of the Montana Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services.

Richard King is the nursing home ombudsman.

Calls for the ombudsman may be made on the senior citizens toll-free hotline. That number is 332-2272. Calls placed between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday will be transferred directly to the ombudsman. Calls will be accepted also on Saturday and Sundays and each day between 5 p.m. and 8 a.m. Any calls during these times will be tape recorded and will receive attention the following work day.

All calls will be kept confidential, stresses King.

King gives examples of some of the types of calls he could receive. For one, if an individual moves into a nursing home and the family sells his



Rich King

or her house, the ombudsman could arrange for legal help for the person in the nursing home.

Or, if a person living in a nursing home believed his or her social security or other checks were being taken and cashed without the approval of the nursing home resident, the ombudsman could arrange to have the situation investigated.

Nursing home personnel might call the ombudsman if, for instance, they have grievances concerning their employment conditions. Or, they may call on behalf of a patient.

Administrators may need the ombudsman's assistance if, as an example, bill payments or other funds are not received on time.

Kings says that in the past, similar situations have been handled through the seniors hotline service but that the ombudsman will be able to be more specialized.

He also mentions that field workers for Aging Services will visit each nursing home once a month and that regular hearing and vision tests will be arranged for the patients.





**Sharon Cromeenes**

## **Sharon Cromeenes Is Administrator Of Visual Services**

**S**haron Cromeenes, visual services counselor supervisor since 1967, has been promoted to administrator of the Visual Services Division, Montana Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services.

He has filled the position left vacant by the death late last year of Emil Honka.

Born and raised in Missouri and Arkansas, Cromeenes has been involved with services to the blind and visually handicapped in Montana since 1938.

He was graduated from Hayti (Missouri) High School and received his bachelor's degree in sociology and economics from Missouri State College in Springfield. He was awarded his master's degree in rehabilitative counseling from the University of Colorado in Boulder.

In 1938, Cromeenes came to Montana as an

instructor and boys' supervisor at the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind. Three years later, the Montana Commission for the Blind was created and Cromeenes was appointed head.

In 1943, when the Commission for the Blind was incorporated into the Montana Department of Public Welfare, Cromeenes became a counselor in services to the blind. In 1967, he became counselor supervisor, the position he held until becoming administrator.

Cromeenes is an active member of the Presbyterian Church and of the Helena Lions Club. He belongs to the Montana Association for the Blind, the American Association of Workers for the Blind and the Rocky Mountain Chapter of the American Association of Workers for the Blind.

He and his wife, Margaret, have two sons, Walter, who lives in Spokane, and Kenneth, who lives in Monrovia, Ca.

## **Conference on Young People To Be Held May 6-8 at EMC**

**A** mid-decade Governor's Conference on Children and Youth, sponsored by the Montana Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services, will be held May 6-8 on the campus of Eastern Montana College in Billings.

Gov. Thomas L. Judge will take part May 7 with an address to and dialog with conference participants.

Congresswoman Patricia Schroeder of Colorado has been invited to be a keynoter. Schroeder, who has been a vigorous supporter of children and youth issues before Congress, is known for having satisfactorily combined career, marriage and family and as a champion of dual career families.

The goals of the conference have been suggested by Montana citizens involved in various ways with children and youth. The goals include: learning what has occurred and what currently is

happening on behalf of children and youth in Montana since the 1970 White House Conference on Children and the 1971 White House Conference on Youth; giving recognition to the problems of handicapped and disadvantaged young people; learning the implication on children's rights of the 1972 Montana Constitution, and providing input to decision makers on issues involving children and youth.

A variety of workshops, which still are being finalized; displays of programs and projects for and by children and youth; discussion sessions, and entertainment by young people will be included in the conference.

The conference is being planned by Montana youth and adults along with the SRS staff. Registration will include half youth participants and half adults. Clark Welch, SRS community planning coordinator for children and youth programs is conference chairman.





As Paula Papovich, right, vocational evaluator for Helena Industries, pretends to be blind, Mary Meyers, secretary in the State Visual Services Division, practices guiding her through a hallway.

# Aid in Helping the Blind Given by Visual Services

**W**ith their eyes securely blindfolded, Helena hospital, nursing home and group home personnel groped their way around the basement of St. Peter's Hospital amid the curious glances of people in the halls.

They hesitatingly shuffled up and down stairs relying on a "sighted" person to guide them—in most instances, someone they didn't even know. They laughed about missing a chair and sitting soundly on the floor and about buttering their hand instead of their bread or about taking a drink from the water glass they's just filled only to find they had used the pitcher's contents to drench the table top.

Participation in the seminar conducted recently by the Visual Services Division of the Montana Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services was fun, but its purpose was serious. It gave those people who work with blind and visually handicapped people a feeling of what it's like not being able to see how to do the simple, daily tasks of life done so automatically with sight. And it gave them an understanding of what things, that are so taken for granted by people with sight, are so difficult for people who can't see well—things that someone with vision might not even think about as posing a problem.

Ricarda Wetsch, orientation-mobility specialist, and Jim Miller and Anita Nelson, instructors, all of SRS Visual Services, conducted the seminar in Helena. Similar seminars have been presented in Butte and Miles City with the help of local Visual Services staffs. Miller says the seminars have been well received and probably will be conducted in other cities as well.

Hospital, nursing home and group home personnel discussed how many of the visually handicapped people they deal with are suffering relatively recent blindness or sight impairments—in most cases due to age. They learned that normal use of the eyes does not impair vision and that a visually handicapped person should be encouraged to continue to do whatever he or she is still capable of with the vision remaining and to stay independently active and interested in life.

Wearing blindfolds, participants learned to feel the way to pour water from a pitcher into a glass, so they will know how to teach a person who cannot see. They learned to compare a plate of food to the face of a clock and to tell the blind person what type of food is placed clockwise around the plate. They learned to butter bread and to dial a phone and to mark clothing according to color.

They practiced being guided and guiding others





**Anita Nelson, right, SRS visual services instructor, gives some tips on working with the visually handicapped to Paula Popovich, left, vocational evaluator, Helena Rehabilitation Industries, and Karen Nerpel, Helena group home parent.**

down wide and narrow, empty and crowded hallways; through doorways that open to the right, the left and in and out; up and down stairs, and in and out of chairs with and without arms.

Recreational materials easily available for visually impaired people were displayed, including large-print books; "talking" books (tape recorded); games such as monopoly, scrabble and bingo in large print and Braille; Braille and large-print playing cards, and specially designed chess and checkers sets.

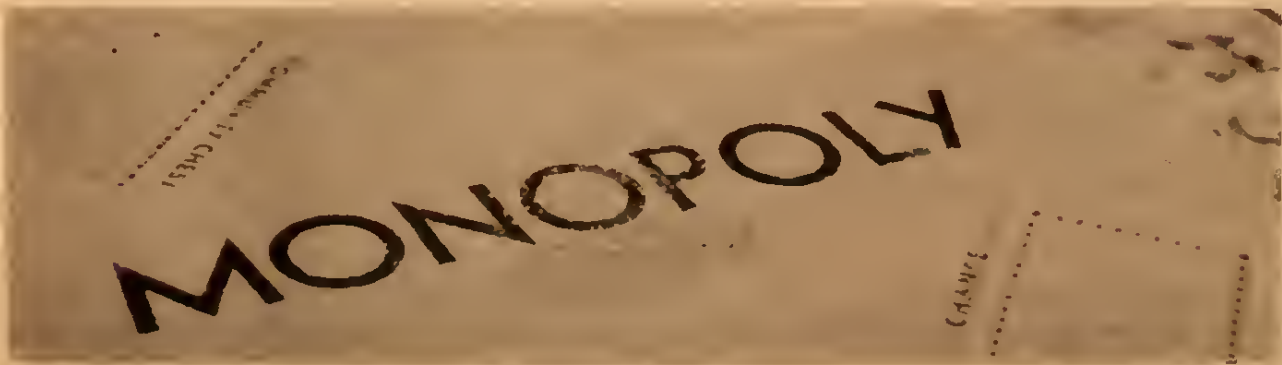
Staff from Visual Services are happy to assist anyone with a visual handicap and anyone who lives or works with a blind or visually impaired person. Regional Visual Services offices are located in Helena, Butte, Missoula, Great Falls, Billings, Glasgow and Miles City.



**Riki Wetsch, orientation-mobility specialist, SRS Visual Services Division, and Jim Miller, SRS visual services instructor, demonstrate how to help a blind person be seated.**



Persons with visual handicaps are not, by any means, restricted to sitting alone and doing nothing. For recreation, many familiar games, such as monopoly, are made with large letters and in Braille. Playing cards also come with large numbers and letters in Braille.





Robert Deaton, assistant professor of social work at the University of Montana and Continuing Education Project coordinator, and Joyce Davis, administrative assistant.



## SRS Staff Continues Education With Assistance of UM Program

**M**aintaining high quality, knowledgeable and interested employees is the aim of the Continuing Education Program administered by the Staff Development Division of the Montana Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services and the Department of Social Work at the University of Montana.

The program is now in its second year of operation.

Designed to take the opportunities for expanded learning to the employees, the Continuing Education Program arranges courses and workshops and provides instructors throughout the state to accommodate the employees. Organizers try to arrange the educational programs as near to the employees as possible.

Last year, the first of the program's existence, 27 workshops of various types were conducted, with 532 SRS employees participating. Most of the employees making up last year's total were social workers, according to project coordinator Robert Deaton, assistant professor of social work, U of M. He adds that the other half was composed of a "substantial" number of administrators, youth development workers, eligibility technicians, homemakers and clerical workers.

The SRS Continuing Education Program was designed especially for the working population of Montana—a rural, sparsely populated state. Courses are conducted in or near the home

communities of workshop participants so that most of the traveling is done by the instructors and not the SRS employees. Whenever feasible, the project shares sponsorship and funding with related organizations.

This year, the Continuing Education Program has been expanded to include a Career Advancement Program for SRS employees who do not possess an undergraduate college degree. Individualized instruction will allow participants to take courses at home, at their own pace, by correspondence, cassette tape and programmed instruction, in order that they may become qualified for agency social services positions.

An example of the type of SRS employee who would be encouraged to take part in career advancement might be an individual without a degree who has worked for years in the welfare department of a sparsely populated county with a small staff, according to Staff Development personnel. Should the county director in that office retire, this individual would be unqualified, without a degree, to fill the position despite his or her many years of experience and complete familiarity with social service and financial assistance programs.

Therefore, this extension of continuing education will attempt to keep the most knowledgeable personnel within the department.

Staff Development believes that SRS can serve the public best when its employees are well informed, well educated, experienced and refreshed.



# Beware, Insurance Hoax Fueled Anew

**T**he Veterans Administration and major veterans organizations have launched a joint effort to stamp out a hoax that has disappointed millions of veterans since it began in 1948.

Charles C. Walter, director of the VA Center at Fort Harrison, says that VA is receiving thousands of telephone calls and letters weekly from World War II veterans who have been deceived into expecting dividends on GI insurance they allowed to lapse years ago.

He says the hoax has been recurring irregularly since 1948, and with each wave of letters it stimulates, VA explains to each applicant that dividends are payable only on policies that are kept in force.

But the hoax is fueled anew every few years by the mysterious distribution of official-looking application forms complete with an address where dividends are said to be available for the asking. The bogus application alleges that dividends are payable even though premiums have not been paid since 1945, he says.

Walter notes the rumor may have its roots in a special dividend paid in 1950 and 1951.

Another theory is that the rumor is fueled annually by VA's announcement of dividends for holders of current insurance policies. These annual payments are made automatically and no application is necessary, he says.

# Health Care for Veterans' Dependents

**S**ome 319 family members have enrolled at the Fort Harrison Veterans Administration Hospital for the agency's health care for dependents during the program's first two years of operation, according to Charles Walter, center director.

Medical care for VA dependents is provided almost entirely by private physicians and non-VA hospitals rather than by VA facilities, says Walter, but full information on the program and enrollment papers are available at the local VA hospitals.

Walter describes the benefits offered by the VA program as "identical to those offered by the armed forces' medical program for military dependents".

Benefits change whenever the military program is changed, he explains, and claims for reimbursement for medical care are processed

through the military system.

The program is for widows, widowers and orphans of veterans who died of service connected causes and for wives, husbands and children of veterans totally and permanently disabled by service connected conditions, provided these dependents and survivors are not eligible for the armed forces' program or for Medicare.

A husband or wife who is divorced from a veteran loses eligibility on the date the divorce becomes final. The eligibility of children is not affected by divorce or remarriage, except that a stepchild would cease to be eligible when he or she leaves the veteran's household.

The Fort Harrison VA Hospital will furnish beneficiaries with ID cards and information on filing claims for reimbursement for medical care from private physicians and non-VA hospitals.

# Grants Available to Adapt Vet's Cars

**D**isabled veterans entitled to replace or purchase adaptive equipment for their automobiles at government expense have been advised of new Veterans Administration safety and quality standards which became effective January 1.

About 63,000 disabled veterans of World War II and thereafter are eligible for, or have received, one-time grants, not to exceed \$3,300, from the VA toward purchase of an automobile. These then may be equipped with aids that modify operating controls.

Depending upon the nature of the disability, the add-on devices typically provide for hand control of brakes and accelerator, alter position of foot controls or assist with the operation of

transmission, steering and other equipment.

The VA has advised, however, that it will not authorize payment for equipment that does not meet the new standards.

Eligibility for automobile grants and adaptive equipment was extended this year to include 5,000 peacetime veterans with service between December 31, 1946, and June 27, 1950. The grants are limited to veterans with permanent loss or use of one or both hands or feet or impairment of vision of both eyes to a prescribed degree, resulting from military service during or after World War II.

The VA invites eligible veterans to contact local VA hospitals or out-patient clinics for complete information on the new automobile adaptive equipment standards.





Hank Lucero, former shoe shop owner and now an instructor of shoe repair at Helena Rehabilitation Industries, takes a look at the resole work of student Fred Gangstad.



Gangstad gives a touch of polish to a renewed boot.

## Work Skills Offered the Handicapped By Helena Rehabilitation Industries

**E**ach issue of the SRS News is labeled, bundled for mailing and deposited at the post office by employees of Helena Rehabilitation Industries, a sheltered workshop.

This is just one of the jobs the employees do. The workshop is bustling and buzzing with contracted and prime manufacturing work ranging from jewelry making to shoe repair and construction.

Currently more than 100 individuals are involved in the various programs available through Helena Rehabilitation Industries, says Robert Hall, executive director. These persons may be mentally retarded, emotionally or physically handicapped or, perhaps, alcoholics or persons from correctional institutions.

The basic reason for the existence of this and other sheltered workshops throughout the state and the nation is stated simply by Hall. "Every individual is of value."

"The changes that occur in these people who come to Helena Industries is something else again," he goes on to say. "Many of them have spent years in institutions. Many times they have felt worthless."

But at Helena Industries they begin to discover self-confidence and self-esteem. They see, for instance, that if they work well, they will be rewarded with payment. Their confidence grows because they have something tangible, something

they have earned, for something they have done well. By visiting Helena Industries one quickly sees the employees' pride in their work.

Helena Rehabilitation Industries offers evaluation, work adjustment training, occupational training, vocational counseling, on-the-job evaluation and counseling, job placement and short-term follow-up.

"The important thing in what we do," explains Hall, "is not the work itself. The work becomes the tool with which we measure a person's capability. What we like to say is our product is people."

Helena Industries trains handicapped people for competitive employment. A person usually is referred to Helena Industries by rehabilitation counselors from the Montana Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services, which pays for participants in the program on a fee basis.

Upon an individual's arrival, about four weeks of evaluation are conducted to determine basically what the person is able to do.

Work adjustment training provides an introduction to the work environment. Through group and individual counseling, the clients learn about such things as getting to work on time, dressing appropriately, punching a time clock. Independent living skills and basic education are included in this segment of training.

On-the-job training and experience allows Helena Industries employees to work out in the





One of the employees at Helena Rehabilitation Industries demonstrates use of the skill evaluation equipment, in this case, the sewing machinery.



Sonya Prescott, left, and Peggy McMeel, employees at Helena Rehabilitation Industries, dig out nut meats in preparation for making "nature jewelry."

community where they are receiving actual, rather than simulated, employment experience.

Hall feels this experience is of great value because, "although we try to simulate as closely as possible a work situation, somewhere along the line we lose some of the competitiveness. Out on a job, if you miss five days of work without a good excuse, for example, you probably will be canned. If an employee does that here, we're likely to be more forgiving."

A full-time job placement counselor works with employers and employees from Helena Industries to arrange work and to help solve problems that may occur.

According to Hall, "The employment situation is such that there may be 20-25 applicants for a job, so most often the employer is likely to take a non-handicapped person. The placement counselor, however, is finding more and more willing employers, and we do offer some incentive. For the first four to six weeks, we will pay the employee's salary."

Those persons unable to go into competitive employment will remain in extended employment, meaning they will continue to work at Helena Industries until they are able to enter the job market. This may be anywhere from a year to five years.

Last year, relates Hall, 59 persons completed rehabilitative training at Helena Industries. Of these, 18 (31 per cent) were placed in competitive employment, and 25 (42 per cent) continued on in extended employment. Others were referred elsewhere for training, such as to a vocational-technical school, another workshop facility, a private college or university or business training. Of those who had been in extended employment, eight per cent went on to the competitive job field.

Forty-five per cent of these employees at Helena Industries last year had been residents of Boulder, Warm Springs, Galen or one of the correctional institutions.

Hall states that the employees placed last year will earn about \$129,000 and will pay back in taxes almost \$26,000. The cost of keeping last year's clients institutionalized, he says, would have been about \$50,000.

"During the first year of employment an individual could pay back almost all of the cost of his or her rehabilitation," says Hall. "Of course, there is no return on those who are not in competitive employment, but the others who are working help to pay their costs."

A variety of skills are practiced at Helena Industries. Currently, shoe repair is being taught by Hank Lucero of Helena. Lucero used to have his own shop. Now he is instructing others. Local shoe shops frequently send their surplus business to the students.

The shoe repair instruction is being carried out with the aid of a grant from the Concentrated Employment Program (CEP) of the Department of Labor and Industry. Also being trained in the program are persons from the Helena Indian Alliance.

Helena Industries is in the process of sewing up a nearly half million dollar contract with the federal government to manufacture plywood boxes. The rehabilitative industries will be the only company in the country making these boxes, says Hall. He notes that full-time employment and training will be possible for about 20 handicapped persons when the project gets underway sometime between April and May first.

In addition to labeling and mailing the SRS publication, Helena Industries employees do similar contracted work for Montana Magazine, the State Historical Society and State Advertising. They make surveyors' stakes for the Highway Department and have made outhouses for the Department of Fish and Game. They recently completed a set of bleachers for the school district in Clancy.

"Because Montana is not an industrial state," explains Hall, "contracted work is not easy to come by, so the work from the state and federal governments is really a boon to our agency."

Among their own manufacturing projects are redwood stained, ready-to-assemble picnic tables and nature jewelry made from nuts and pinecones.

Helena Rehabilitation Industries is a private, non-profit community agency. It is governed by a completely voluntary 15-member board of directors made up of a cross-section of the community.

All of the money paid to Helena Industries for its rehabilitation work comes through the state, but the state gets a federal reimbursement on 80 per cent of its regular rehabilitative services money, and 75 per cent of the developmental disabilities dollars it spends are federal.



# Social Security Says: Must Work 6¼ Years to Collect

**M**ost men and women who reach 62 years of age in 1976 can collect monthly social security checks if they've worked as little as 6¼ years in jobs covered by social security, according to social security officials in Montana.

People earn retirement benefits by credit for work covered by social security done in or after 1937, the year social security started. The work credit is measured in calendar quarters—January-March, April-June, July-September, or October-December.

"Most employees get credit for a quarter of work if they've paid \$50 or more in that quarter for work covered by social security," a spokesman says. "Most self-employed people get social security credit for four quarters in any year their annual self-employment net income is \$400 or more."

"To be eligible for social security retirement benefits," the spokesman says, "you need, at a minimum, quarters of work equal to the number of years between 1950 and the year you reach 62. So, if you reach 62 in 1976, you need at least 25

quarters—or 6¼ years—of work credit."

Eligible workers can begin collecting their full social security retirement benefits at 65 or reduced benefits at 62. Dependents can also get payments based on the worker's earnings record.

"Quarters of work credit help determine eligibility for social security retirement benefits," the spokesman says, "but they don't affect the amount of your monthly check. That's based on your average earnings covered by social security over a set period of time."

"You can find out how much work and earnings are credited to your social security record free of charge," he said. "Call any social security office and ask the people there to send you a REQUEST FOR STATEMENT OF EARNINGS post card."

Social security now pays over \$3.6 billion a month in retirement benefits to over 19½ million people—16 million retired workers and their families. The average monthly payment to retired workers is \$200.

The Social Security Administration is an agency of the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

## WIC Nutrition Program Expands Its Services

**T**he Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program in Montana has received \$3.1 million for funding through fiscal year 1976, and by July, the WIC Program will have been expanded to include an additional 15 counties, according to Mary Feuersinger, State WIC coordinator with the Montana Department of Health and Environmental Sciences.

"WIC is a supplemental food, nutrition education and health care program for high risk women, infants and children," explains Ms. Feuersinger.

It provides nutritious foods to pregnant and nursing women and to children under the age of five years, who are determined to be in nutritional need.

Currently, ten counties and seven Indian reservations are participating in the program. The fifteen additional counties that have been approved for coverage under WIC are: Big Horn, Blaine, Choteau, Fergus, Glacier, Lake, Phillips, Pondera, Roosevelt, Rosebud, Sheridan, Judith Basin, Wheatland, Golden Valley and Petroleum.

"Eligibility for the program has been expanded to include: post partum mothers for six months, or up to one year if they are nursing, and children until their fifth birthday," says Ms. Feuersinger. "The participant must be determined to be in nutritional need and must be eligible for free or reduced health care costs within the county that is served by the program."

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